/73 cont./

102
131
133
491
496

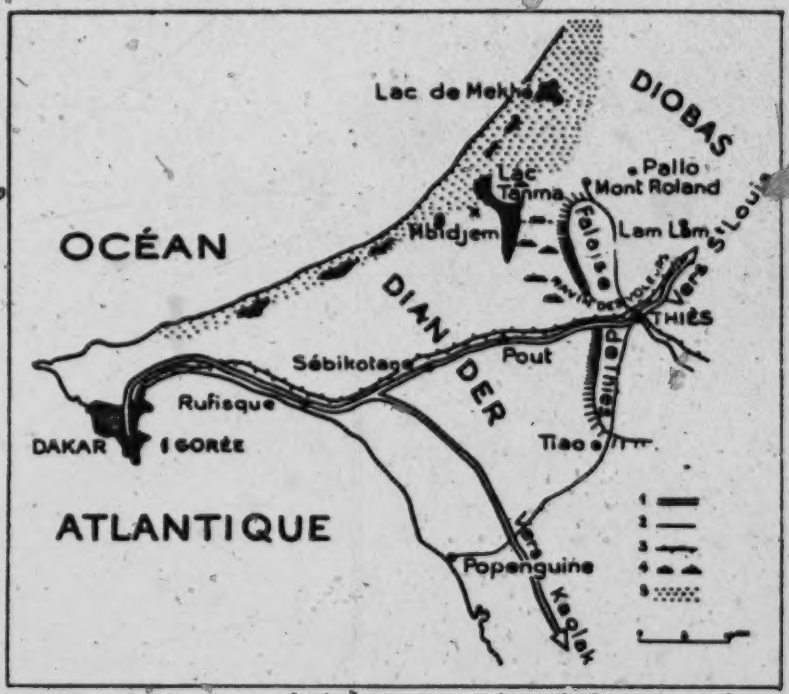

Fig. 1. The location of Thiès in Senegal. 1. Main paved road; 2, secondary road; 3. railroad; 4. swamps; 5. sand.

175
369
361

Verde Peninsula. As long ago as this epoch Thiès seems to have been a strategic point and support point of primary importance.

As early as 1880 the provinces of Diander and Diobas were pacified. The military posts lost their importance and were abandoned one after the other, for example, Nguiguis (near Tivaouane) and Mbidjem. Only the one at Thiès, because of its exceptional location, survived and developed.

175
369
499
244

2. The commercial escale (1880-1923).

The years of the decade 1880-1890 correspond to the period of the development of groundnut cultivation in Senegal and to the construction of the Dakar--Saint-Louis railroad.

/73 cont./

175 369 499 133 The surveys for the future course of this railway revealed that the shortest route would have to follow the Atlantic coast, but since this is bordered by dunes it would necessitate some important construction work. The passage across the slope of Thiès was also a serious obstacle, but the "Ravin des Voleurs" made access to the plateau possible; the line would thus follow the valley which cuts the brow of the hill, then the depression which follows the plateau to the east, and would pass in front of the military fort established at its extremity.

175 369 [361] The fortune of Thiès was made: as early as 1885, the date of the opening of the railroad, the merchants of Rufisque set up branches there; a plan for dividing the future city into lots was outlined. This plan, unfortunately, foresaw the development of the city only north of the line, along the trail connecting Thiès with Rufisque and Dakar. A Catholic [797] mission was established in the vicinity, and in 1893 the first civil administrator occupied the new residence built near the Faidherbe redoubt.

175 369 439 [496] [492] The groundnut policy developed successfully; 20,000 tons of groundnuts were shipped by rail from the Thiès station in 1890 (3). Commerce, however, was not established in

3. Convoys of camels competed with the railway up to 1910 and transported their cargo to the port of Rufisque. Thiès was the last stop before reaching the quays of embarkation 50 kilometers away.

[366] [441] permanent fashion in the escale: only during the period of trading (from November to May) did the European employees sent by the firms of Rufisque live in the city and buy groundnuts, millet, cotton ... at their branches; from May to November they returned to Rufisque, and most of the shops in Thiès were closed, the city seemingly dead.

22:Winterbotham et al. K-4 (no date) 1944 M837 Senegal MS39
MALI MS35

3. Thiès–Kidira (352½ miles).
4. Diourbel–Touba (31 miles).
5. Guinguiné–Kaolack (14 miles).
6. Kaolack–Lyndiane (6½ miles).

History

The first plan for a railway was made by Linet-Laprade in 1857. It was to connect the head of navigation on the Senegal with a suitable point on the Niger, and in 1863 Mage prospected the country between Medine and Bamako. During the next fifteen years or so various other schemes were proposed. All of them were chiefly concerned with the military conquest of Cayor, of the middle Niger basin, and of the lands between Timbuktu and Algeria. Many of them envisaged a trans-Saharan line, and there seems to have been little thought of economic development.

On 5 February 1880 a Bill was introduced into the French Chamber of Deputies to authorize a line from Dakar to St. Louis with a branch to Medine and the middle Niger. It was considerably amended before being passed, the chief alteration being the excision of the section from St. Louis to Medine.

Surveys of the two other sections were made, and on 21 June 1882 a contract was signed with the Société de Construction des Batignolles to build a line from Dakar to St. Louis. This company remained the owner of the line until it was bought out by the Government in 1933. European labour was largely employed in construction, and this meant that work had to be suspended from July to November each year. In spite of this and other difficulties, the line was opened on 6 July 1885. This was the first railway in West Africa.

It soon became apparent that faulty methods had been used. The wooden sleepers were eaten by termites and the track had been very poorly ballasted. These defects, however, were eventually remedied.

The railway achieved its military purpose, but its economic results were of equal value. In particular, it stimulated the production of ground-nuts by providing means for their export. This had important effects on the development of Dakar and of Rufisque.

Meanwhile a little progress had been made on the section linking the Senegal with the Niger. In contradistinction to the Dakar–St. Louis line, the work was done by the Government. It had an inauspicious beginning. Medine is 625 miles by river from St. Louis and can only be reached by barge in August and September. Material brought from the port was seldom taken farther than Kayes, and goods

22:Winterbotham et al. K-4 (no date) 1944 MS37 Senegal MS 37
Mali MS 35

were dumped there and at places even farther downstream. These had to be transported upstream in barges drawn by men. Diseases, especially yellow fever, caused many deaths, and there were endless difficulties with workmen, both European and native. Furthermore, the country was not fully known and only half pacified. Work began at Medine in the middle of 1881, but the military post at Kita was less than six months old, and that at Bamako was not set up until 1883. By the end of 1881 precisely one kilometre of the line had been completed. In the following year the ships started from St. Louis too late and could not even reach Kayes. There were several epidemics of typhoid and several fires in the store dumps.

By 1884 there were 34 miles of track, but it was so badly constructed as to be incapable of supporting the weight of a locomotive. There was no ballast, poor local wood was used for sleepers, curves were too sharp, and gradients were too severe. In 1888 the work was handed over to the French Marines, who made some improvements in the existing track and extended it to Mahina, a distance of 66 miles. It was still unusable. In the following year a Commission was appointed, and made various recommendations, some of which showed that the original purpose of the line had become obscured. By 1891 there were 79 miles of metre-gauge track from Kayes to Mahina, a ferry across the Bafing, 24 miles of 60 cm.-gauge track from there to Diouléba, and 3 miles of 50 cm.-gauge track beyond that place. In the same year another Commission was appointed, and in the following year a party of engineers was sent out under the command of Major Joffre. Substantial improvements were rapidly effected, and in 1893 the first train ran from Kayes to Mahina. In 1896 the Bafing was bridged. In May 1904 the line, metre-gauge all the way, reached the Niger at Bamako and on 10 December that year it reached Koulikoro. It has since been considerably improved.

In the summer of 1902 the Senegal failed to rise. This prevented any effective provisioning of the posts in French Sudan and also gave a stimulus to railway construction. The original plan for a line from St. Louis to Kayes was dropped, and Thiès was chosen as the junction. The new railway was intended not only to provide a link between existing lines but also to find and attract local traffic. Various routes were discussed, and in 1907 construction began from both ends. The section from Kayes to Ambidedi (26 miles) was opened in December 1908 and that from Thiès to Diourbel (50½ miles) on 16 July 1909. Work on the latter began again in February 1910 and the line reached Guinguiné in the December of that year. By the middle of 1913 it

22: Winterbotham et al. K-4 (no date) 1944 M537 Senegal MS 37
Mali MS 35

was at Koussanar, and when war came in 1914 it had reached a place called Cotiari Naoudé, 258 miles from Thiès. In 1920 a force of 8,000 labourers was recruited, and the line was completed on 5 August 1923.

Branch Lines. Work on the branch from Guinguiné to Kaolack began on 6 June 1911, and the line was officially opened on 1 January 1912. This railway, of course, has transformed Kaolack and has been the prime factor in its growth to its present importance. The private line from Kaolack to Lyndiane was built by the firm of Charles Peyrissac et Cie in 1925.

The line from Diourbel was originally planned to go to Tal-Tal and Thiel. Construction began on 1 December 1929, and the line reached Touba on 1 March 1931. Financial difficulties postponed further extension, and nothing more has been done up to the present. This branch has proved valuable to local producers of ground-nuts and has been more successful than its contemporary to Linguéré.

This latter was begun from Louga early in 1929 and reached Coki (18½ miles) on 1 October that year. Railhead was at Dahra on 1 October 1930 and the whole line was finished on 1 October 1931. Results have not been quite as good as had been hoped.

Permanent Way, Locomotives, and Rolling-stock

Rails and Sleepers. The section from Dakar to St. Louis has rails weighing 30 kg. per metre (61 lb. per yard) bought second-hand from the Nord Railway of France in 1929, and that from Thiès to Kayes has rails weighing 25 kg. and 26 kg. per metre (50½ lb. and 52½ lb. per yard). The track from Kayes to Koulikoro was originally laid with rails weighing 20 kg. per metre (40 lb. per yard) and was notorious for its numerous rail breakages; but it is now in process of being relaid on a new alinement with rails weighing 30 kg. per metre (61 lb. per yard). The Louga–Linguéré branch was given the old rails from the Dakar–St. Louis line. These weigh 20 kg. per metre (40 lb. per yard).

Sleepers are of steel.

Gradients and Curvature. These vary considerably, but there are no gradients steeper than 1: 30, and the minimum radius of curves is 197 yards. It is intended ultimately to reduce these figures to 1: 71 and 219 yards respectively.

Bridges. The principal bridges are noted in the itineraries below. Minor bridges are of steel and concrete, and in many cases old rails are used as reinforcing bars. Culverts are numerous.